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BOOK OF THE DAY

Another view of the CIA

By Margaret Manning
Globe-Staff*WITHOUT CLOAK OR DAGGER,*
by Miles Copeland. Simon & Schuster,
351 pp., \$8.95.

Here we are in spook country. Miles Copeland may well have written "Without Cloak Or Dagger" to counterblast the authors of the highly critical "The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence" (which the CIA tried to suppress), but even if that were the seed that germinated into his book, he has nonetheless produced an eminently readable insider's manual in the many means by which intelligence is gathered.

This is a "how to" book with a twist. It is an exhaustive, presumably accurate, even if for security reasons not entirely precise, explanation of what the Central Intelligence Agency does, with a disproportionate emphasis on espionage.

Disproportionate because most of the CIA's endeavors are boring, chair-bound and scholarly. When Gen. Bedell Smith was CIA head he commissioned a group of professors to "put themselves in the shoes of Soviet intelligence analysts and to see how complete an appraisal of American military strength they could get by studying only published information." The result was a report which Smith felt could not be improved through espionage.

Sq, Intelligence and Espionage are not synonymous.

Copeland (who has been in and out of US intelligence for 30 years) insists that the CIA is not an espionage but an intelligence organization with the small espionage section always the CIA's last resort.

This section, the "Office of Special Operations," maintains stations in many US Embassies, as well as a staff of officers and subordinates in Langley, Va. The station chiefs are senior CIA men who are "covered" by various appropriate titles, diplomatic and otherwise.

But, says Copeland, CIA chiefs (unlike British and Soviet) are not permitted to run an emergency espionage operation unless the objective is absolutely vital. The CIA believes in low profile, long-term agents who are nationals of the country in which they are employed, and, more important, employees of their own government.

Americans in the CIA abroad are never truly spies, but simply subverters of willing natives. Often the agent recruited doesn't even know which foreign intelligence service has hired him, or often her, because the recruiter has figured out which service is most acceptable (morally, if such a word can be used) to the agent and lets him/her think that is the one being served. A nasty business.

"Without Cloak and Dagger" is both chilling and highly entertaining. It is full of facts and anecdotes and probably will become a primer for future thriller writers, though why Copeland should want to make all this material public is a question that raises other questions.

My principal qualm after reading of all the mountainous expense involved in supporting traitors in their declining years was a mild wonder as to whether our government actually acts, makes policy, on the information so unpleasantly amassed. What if they don't? What if it's just a matter of, figuratively, dumping bundles of cash into the Bosphorus?